

Wait!

WHY ARE THE PLANTS PINK?!

A guide to invasive plants in Arlington, MA



It takes careful planning to control and eliminate invasive species. It also takes hard work and persistence, sometimes over two or more growing seasons to be successful. But, progress is possible! The work is important and will help native species to thrive. This guide will help you learn more about the invasive species found in Arlington.

Note: You need to be licensed to use herbicides. Please contact our office at 718-316-3012 if your plans involve chemical controls.

Arlington has many invasive plant species throughout town. Invasives are dangerous to our natural environment because they exhibit the following characteristics.

1. They spread aggressively.
2. They suffocate native plants.
3. They grow rapidly and reach maturity quickly.
3. They harm wildlife by taking away food and habitat.
5. They are difficult to remove and control.

Invasive plants take away from the diversity of Arlington's environment. Less diversity makes our ecology more unstable. For example, plants are more susceptible to disease. Pollinators have fewer places to eat and nest. Climate change effects like drought have more of an impact. It is a lose-lose situation.

The three most common invasives found in Arlington are Garlic Mustard, Japanese Knotweed, Oriental Bittersweet. This guide will teach you how to identify these plants and effectively manage them.

GARLIC MUSTARD (*ALLIARIA PETIOLATA*)

WHAT IS IT?

Garlic mustard has a two-year life cycle. It is hard to recognize in its first year. It grows small leaves close to the ground that often go unnoticed until late in the season. In its second year, it grows flower stalks that spread seed. It is most recognizable in the second year.

You can easily remove garlic mustard by hand in the spring; just rip it out and put it in your household trash. You will need to be persistent. Garlic mustard seeds can be viable for up to five years. Just a few plants can quickly reseed a cleared area. Once you start pulling, continue to do so once a year until the plant stops coming back.

WHEN TO REMOVE

Remove this plant by hand in the spring from mid to late April until mid to late May. The soft, wet spring ground will make the job easier. Avoid pulling when the plant has gone to seed as you may wind up spreading it.

If you are removing the plant in its first year, the roots might stay underground. Make sure to get the entire root system up when you pull.

HOW TO REMOVE

Grab a plastic bag from your kitchen. Put the bag over the plant so no seeds escape while you're pulling.

Grasp the plant at the base and gently pull the roots from the ground. If it breaks, continue pulling the root out.

HOW TO DISPOSE

Discard the entire plant, roots and all, in sealed plastic garbage bags. Do not put it in with your yard waste.

If you have large quantities, contact our office to coordinate pick up. Do not attempt to compost this plant. It will reseed and regenerate and does not break down like other yard waste.

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE



JAPANESE KNOTWEED (*POLYGONUM CUSPIDATUM*)

WHAT IS IT?

Japanese knotweed looks like bamboo. It often grows to heights over 6 feet and in dense stands. It spreads via rhizomes—roots that shoot out deep and wide in the soil. This makes knotweed particularly hard to eradicate.

WHEN TO REMOVE

There is no bad time to remove this plant. However, removing it in the spring will help avoid growth in the summer, when it grows fastest. You should return to the removal site again in the fall to cut back any summer growth before the ground freezes. Plan on doing removals in the spring and fall for several years.

HOW TO REMOVE

The best method for control is to cut the plant to the ground as many as three times a season. Following each cutting, cover the area with heavy-gauge black plastic film and mulch. Depriving the rhizomes of light is the only way to prevent their regeneration.

When cutting the stalks, cut flush with the ground, leaving no protruding stumps.

Be careful digging up this plant. Even the smallest bits of the root system that break off will form new plants.

HOW TO DISPOSE

Discard the entire plant, roots and all, in sealed plastic garbage bags. Do not put it in with your yard waste.

If you have large quantities, contact our office to coordinate pick up. Do not attempt to compost this plant. It will regenerate.

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE



ORIENTAL BITTERSWEET (*CELASTRUS ORBICULATUS*)

WHAT IS IT?

Oriental Bittersweet is a common vine with attractive orange and red fall berries. The plant is sometimes used in fall wreath displays. Bittersweet can pull down whole trees when it climbs unchecked. It will wipe out any other plant life in the area.

WHEN TO REMOVE

The best season for this treatment is late fall after leaf drop. The root will sprout again if cut before late summer/early fall. If cut in the fall, they won't sprout again until the following season. Continue to cut back new growth until the plant gives up. Plan on cutting it back every fall for two to three years.

HOW TO REMOVE

Young vines can be uprooted by hand. Try to pull out as much of the root as possible. If the vine has climbed a tree, cut the vine at the base, and again as high up as possible, but don't try to pull it down. You may hurt the tree in the process.

HOW TO DISPOSE

You can compost this plant or put it in with your yard waste collection, but make sure it's dead first. Leave the cut plant in the sun for a few days to dry out. Putting it in a black plastic bag in the sun will speed

up the process by trapping heat inside.

If you have large quantities, contact our office to coordinate pick up.

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE

